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# Measuring News Media Literacy: How Knowledge and Motivations Combine to Create News-Literate Teens

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to create news-literate teens

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# Preface

The metaphors used to describe the digital, networked, social, interactive and information-rich age in which we live – it's a wave, a flood, even a tidal wave! – suggest a powerlessness that can be dispiriting. The promise of so much easily accessible information quickly transforms into peril as we wonder just how to make sense of all that abundance, how to find the signal amidst all the noise.

Efforts to improve news media literacy are aimed directly at the promise and perils of abundance. Better understanding of what makes news reliable and credible is a first step toward a citizenry that is better equipped to make smarter decisions and engage in democratic society. Before we can take that first step, though, we need to define what, exactly, news media literacy is so that we can develop methods for improving it and recognize whether those methods are successful or not.

We were honored and excited to receive generous funding from the McCormick Foundation to develop a tool to aid in these efforts. To date, our research has employed focus groups, surveys, classroom ethnographies and qualitative data analysis to develop an instrument for measuring news media literacy. In the early stages, we learned that while young adults might have strong attitudes about the news media, those attitudes are based on spotty factual understanding of how news media operate and the contexts in which news is created. Many, for example, can recognize – even criticize – the focus on conflict and celebrity stories in the news, but they have difficulty telling the difference between a news story and a video press release. As the project proceeded, we found a positive relationship between knowledge about how the news media work and knowledge of current events. Theory tells us that greater news media literacy goes hand in hand with positive societal attitudes and behaviors such as paying attention to current events, voting and other forms of civic engagement, a line of thinking at least partly reflected in what the young people in our focus groups told us: News is important, but not until we're old enough to vote. Our research thus far suggests that learning about how news media operate may indeed be important to producing those pro-social outcomes.

This report details our approach to conceptualizing news media literacy and creating a way to gauge it. This research fits well with the aspirations of McCormick's "Why News Matters" initiative, aimed at growing an audience that appreciates and understands news and is empowered by that understanding. We believe that better definition of news media literacy can help support the development of successful programs across the Foundation's broad mission related to news literacy and journalism education. We hope educators, policymakers and others working to improve the news diets of communities and the conditions of democratic life will find this work useful in meeting their goals.

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# Executive Summary

Developing ways to improve young people's news media literacy has been the focus of much recent attention among scholars, educators, and news professionals. Common definitions and approaches, however, have been scarce, making it difficult to compare and analyze curriculum effectiveness and research results. This project sought to create a measure of news media literacy that can be used to further our understanding of what constitutes news media literacy and to help validate and improve education and training.

"News media literacy" refers to the knowledge and motivations needed to identify, appreciate and engage with quality journalism. Adapting a model of media literacy to news media specifically, we constructed and tested a number of survey items that, taken together, form a measure of news media literacy. Focus groups with Chicago-area teenagers enriched our understanding of young people's definitions of and experiences with news and helped us fine-tune the survey instrument. We then tested the measure by surveying more than 500 Chicago-area teenagers about their news media literacy, news consumption, news media skepticism and current events knowledge.

In the focus groups, we learned:

- Teenagers' news consumption is often "accidental," not intentional.
- Teenagers recognize common elements of newsworthiness, but only some are able to explain how economic, political, and other forces can affect news content.
- Teenagers had experience in their own lives where news consumption produced noticeable effects on themselves and others; one teen described her parents as heavy TV news consumers who were "so scared" of what was happening in the world.
- Teenagers believe that following the news is important -- just not yet. Many speculated that their interest in news would increase as they grew older.

From the survey, we learned:

- The News Media Literacy scale can distinguish highly news media literate teenagers from those with low news media literacy. The more news media literate teenagers engage in mindful thought processes, believe themselves to be in control of news media message processing, and have a high degree of knowledge about the news industry and its structures and routines.
- News media literate teenagers are more likely to report being intrinsically motivated to consume news, seeing it as a core part of their identities.
- News media literate teenagers report being slightly more skeptical of the news media relative to those who are less literate.
- News media literate teenagers tend to have at least one parent who went to college.
- The amount of news teenagers consume is not related to their level of news media literacy. This is true regardless of the medium they use to get news.
- News media literate teenagers show a higher level of current events knowledge, even in an election season, a time of very high saturation of news information.



# Background

## Introduction

In today's media-saturated environment, it is vital for young people to learn about how and why media content is produced. Successfully navigating the digital age surely requires media education. A growing body of scholarly research agrees with this general idea, but what exactly should students learn, and what are the best methods for teaching? How can teachers know when they have been effective? How can teachers help students become motivated and engaged rather than disaffected and cynical? The field of media literacy attempts to address these questions, but scholars and educators still lack consensus when it comes to defining, deploying and assessing media literacy education (Christ, 2004; Hobbs & Jensen, 2009; Potter, 2010).

While academic debates continue, today's ideas about media literacy continue to center on critical thinking (Silverblatt, 2008), analysis and evaluation (Aufderheide & Firestone, 1993; Hobbs, 2010), and conscious processing (Potter, 2004). Scholars agree that at the core of media literacy are the notions that all media messages and products are constructed using creative production techniques, that messages can be interpreted differently by different people, that media have embedded values and points of view, and that messages are generally created to gain profit and/or power (Thoman & Jolls, 2004). Furthermore, for the past two decades, scholars have generally embraced the idea that media literate individuals should be able to access, analyze, evaluate and create media content (Aufderheide & Firestone, 1993).

Today, scholars and educators are beginning to focus attention on the emerging subfield of "news media literacy," in which media educators apply the broad goals and frameworks of media literacy to news content (Hobbs, 2010; Mihailidis, 2011). Although news content has long been fodder for



examination in educational settings, scholars and educators are only beginning to formalize goals and applications for news media literacy (Ashley et al., 2013). With this report, we consider how existing, broadly agreed upon media literacy frameworks apply to news content, and we test this application by conducting surveys and focus groups with Chicago-area high school students.

### **What is News Media Literacy?**

Media literacy centers on the idea that representations of reality are often incomplete or inaccurate (Hobbs & Frost, 2003; Kellner & Share, 2005; Thoman & Jolls, 2004). News media content is no less immune from this shortcoming than other forms of media (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). What sets news apart from media generally and makes it worthy of a separate investigation – and an even higher level of scrutiny – is the unique role of news in democracy. News, unlike other media content, is expected to do the job of informing self-governing citizens (Christians et al., 2009), a role that faces mounting challenges as traditional news outlets shrink and disappear, and emerging digital media products demonstrate both the promise and the perils of information online.

When we connect previous scholarship about news media with the goals of media literacy, the implications for the potential importance of news media literacy are clear. Audiences could be better equipped to access, evaluate, analyze and create news media products if they had a more complete understanding of the conditions in which news is produced. News media literacy is a subset of the broader field of media literacy (Mihailidis, 2012; Mihailidis, 2011), yet it has received little scholarly research attention even as news media literacy programs are being deployed in schools and colleges. With our focus on news media literacy, we seek to develop research tools that will help define and evaluate effective approaches to teaching young people how to understand news in ways that facilitate civic engagement.

We consider news media literacy to be an important educational goal because of its potential to improve appreciation for and increase consumption of quality journalism (Hobbs, 2010; Mihailidis, 2011), and by extension, to improve the conditions of citizenship and democracy. As facilitators of democracy, news media espouse a number of principles (e.g., journalism's first obligation is to the truth, journalism's first loyalty is to citizens, journalism should be independent and accountable) (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007), but evidence points to structural limitations that inhibit journalism in performing these functions (McChesney, 2004). The knowledge requirements of what has been called critical media literacy suggest that it may be important for news media consumers to have some specific understanding of the normative goals of journalism and the forces that influence news media content.

In general, critical media literacy includes a focus on social and political contexts and can be understood to include differences between American and other media systems, economic imperatives, media ownership and control issues, and the techniques used by media marketers (Hobbs, 2008; Potter, 2004; Lewis, 2009; McLaughlin, 1994). Many media literacy scholars favor a critical approach as a means for improving citizenship, encouraging social change and promoting the public interest (Lewis & Jhally, 1998; Masterman, 1997; Dyson, 1998).

### **Assessment and Evaluation**

The need to assess the effectiveness of media literacy education in general has been one of the main concerns of scholars and educators in the field (Martens, 2010; Potter, 2004). In explicating his



cognitive theory of media literacy, Potter (2004) suggests that such a theory is necessary to help establish a rationale for evaluation techniques. “We desperately need research to provide findings about how people can improve their filtering of messages from the media as well as improve their experiences with the information they encounter” (p. 38). He adds that advancing media literacy education may even be dangerous without an appropriate understanding of what it is meant to accomplish and how and why it will do this. “Media literacy is a concern that demands we do something. However, doing something before we are clear about what we need to do is not likely to decrease the risks of harmful effects, and it may end up making the situation worse” (p. 39).

Research suggests that media literacy educational interventions are often successful and have had positive effects on outcomes including media knowledge, criticism, perceived realism, influence, behavioral beliefs, attitudes, self-efficacy and behavior (Jeong et al., 2012). Research to develop methods for studying and evaluating the usefulness and effectiveness of media literacy education continues to grow. For example, scholars taking quantitative approaches have demonstrated that media literacy interventions can have positive outcomes, based on measures of message comprehension, writing and critical thinking (Hobbs & Frost, 2003) or media structures and influence scales (Duran, 2008). Researchers employing qualitative methods such as case studies (Sobers, 2008; Williamson, 1999) and ethnographies (Van Bauwel, 2008) likewise found that media literacy education can be effective and can also stimulate learning in non-media-related areas. Research has also demonstrated that students who do not undergo formal media literacy training generally possess low levels of critical literacy and are in need of educational interventions (Ashley et al., 2012).

Other studies measuring the effects of civic and media curricula on young people have found that participation in deliberative media instruction predicted news attention, issue salience, political discussion and other variables (McDevitt & Kioussis, 2006), and civic-oriented service learning classes can lead to positive engagement among students and community members (Wahl & Quintanilla, 2005). More closely related to our study, one experiment related to news found that a media literacy presentation could mitigate perceptions of bias (Vraga et al., 2009), while another found that education about the media system could increase skepticism as measured by credibility ratings of news stories (Ashley et al., 2010). Despite this evidence, the range of ad hoc approaches for assessing the effects of media education, employing different definitions and measures and failing to establish one or more types of validity, make it difficult to compare results across studies or over time.

Without tools for evaluating and assessing student learning, it’s difficult to know what kind of impact media literacy education can have. In the subfield of news media literacy, additional questions arise. Does learning about news make students more civically engaged (as we hope) or does it make them more cynical and apathetic (as some fear)? Evaluation helps to determine what aspects of literacy should be taught and how they should be taught. For example, should instruction focus more on how journalists gather the news or on structural and economic issues? Different topics are appropriate for different age groups.

With these and other questions in mind, the goal of our research was to create and validate a survey tool that can be used in a variety of settings and applications to measure young adults’ news media literacy. Related objectives include identifying gaps in news media literacy that can be addressed through educational interventions, and establishing the extent to which levels of news media literacy are correlated with attitudes and behaviors related to news media use and democratic citizenship.

## **5 Measuring News Media Literacy**

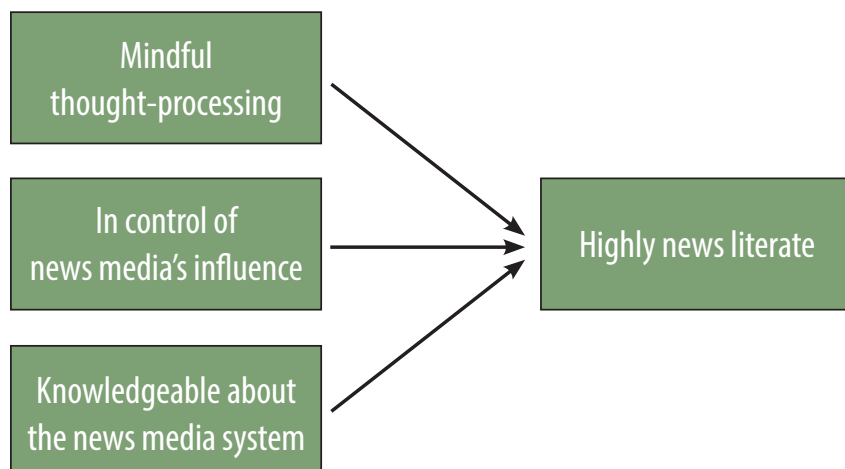
## A Model of News Media Literacy

W. James Potter's (2004) cognitive model of media literacy provides the theoretical framework for this project. Potter's model is useful because it considers several factors affecting overall literacy, including the knowledge that is necessary to be prepared for media exposure as well as the ways in which individuals process information once exposed. Potter argues that his model requires more "conscious processing of information" and "preparation for exposures" than earlier conceptualizations of media literacy (2004, p. 68). We adapted this model to focus specifically on news media literacy.

In Potter's model, five basic "knowledge structures" – knowledge about media content, media industries, media effects, the real world and the self – interact with a person's combination of drives, needs and intellectual abilities (called the "personal locus") that govern information processing and constructing meaning from that information. According to Potter, "With knowledge in these five areas, people are much more aware during the information-processing tasks and are, therefore, more able to make better decisions about seeking out information, working with that information, and constructing meaning from it that will be useful to serve their own goals" (2004, p. 69). The more robust the knowledge structures and personal locus, the higher the level of media literacy an individual has attained.

In terms of news media literacy specifically, knowledge about content, industries and effects includes such information as the values that underlie news and how it is constructed; the impact of news media economics, ownership and control on news content; and the consequences, both positive and negative, of news media exposure. Knowledge of the "real world" refers to a person's knowledge of reality as compared to news media depictions of reality, which are often incomplete and inaccurate and contain distorted pictures. Reliance on such distortions can increase a person's risk for negative effects, as Potter points out (2004, p. 92). Knowledge of the self refers to one's awareness of her motivations for seeking news content and the degree to which she internalizes news media messages. This self-awareness requires knowledge of one's own cognitive, emotional and moral development as well as one's conscious and unconscious personal goals for obtaining information.

Applied to news media literacy this model would suggest, then, that greater knowledge about what is in the news, the conditions under which news is produced and the effects news can have on people, as well as greater control and consciousness regarding news consumption, will result in higher levels of news media literacy. The model also helps us examine the interplay between knowledge



structures and the personal locus. For example, if a person is driven to consume news but lacks solid knowledge structures about it, he won't be able to make much sense of what he has consumed. Conversely, the news media literacy of someone with solid knowledge structures but little motivation to process the news would be diminished.

## Building a News Media Literacy Measure

A media literate person, under Potter's model, is one who thinks deeply about her media experience, believes she is in control of media's influence on her, and has a high degree of basic knowledge about media content, industries and effects. Our primary objective was to adapt this model to create and validate a survey tool that can be used to gauge young adults' levels of news media literacy. Related objectives include identifying gaps in news media literacy that can be addressed via educational and other interventions, and establishing the extent to which level of news media literacy is correlated with attitudes and behaviors related to news media use and democratic citizenship.

News media literacy varies according to 1) the degree to which one engages in mindful versus automatic thought-processing of news, 2) the degree to which one perceives herself as being in control versus the news media being in control of the influence of news media, and 3) the knowledge one has of the institutions that produce news, the way in which the content of the news is produced and the effects of that content on people.

How did we translate those three components into a measure of news media literacy?

**Automatic versus mindful thought-processing.** Much psychological research has explored the extent to which individuals engage in mindful thought-processing, and scales have been developed to measure the concept "need for cognition." This is an individual difference — or personality characteristic — that assesses the degree to which an individual engages in activities that require deep and effortful thinking.

We used a shortened, five-item "need for cognition" scale used in previous research (Epstein et al., 1996) to measure this concept. Respondents were asked to respond to each of the statements by saying how much they agreed with it on a five-point scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree). The statements used to measure "need for cognition" were as follows:

- I don't like to have to do a lot of thinking. (Item reverse-coded so that a higher score meant greater need for cognition)
- I try to avoid situations that require thinking in depth about something. (reverse-coded)
- I prefer to do something that challenges my thinking abilities rather than something that requires little thought.
- I prefer complex to simple problems.
- Thinking hard and for a long time about something gives me little satisfaction. (reverse-coded)



Responses were averaged across the items to create a single score to indicate “need for cognition.” A higher score would indicate more mindful processing of media content. Low scores, on the other hand, would indicate that when media messages are processed, individuals are relying on automatic habits previously formed. In other words, those with high scores are more likely to be more mindful, thinking very consciously about the media messages to which they are exposed.

**Person in control versus media in control.** According to Potter, a person can be aware or not of media message’s controlling influence. Those who are more aware of the media’s controlling nature are thought to be more personally in control of their own exposure and the influences media might have on them.

Like the thought-processing concept, much psychological research has explored the extent to which an individual believes himself to be in control. One concept that taps into this control orientation is “locus of control,” which assesses the extent to which individuals believe they can affect the factors that influence their lives.

We adapted a scale previously used to measure the extent to which an individual feels she is in control of her own health (Wallston & Studler Wallston, 1978) to measure “media locus of control.” This measure gauges the extent to which an individual believes she controls how the media influence her.

The scale included six items. Respondents were asked to respond to each of the statements by saying how much they agreed with it on a five-point scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree). The statements used to measure “media locus of control” were as follows:

- If I am misinformed by the news media, it is my own behavior that determines how soon I will learn credible information.
- I am in control of the information I get from the news media.
- When I am misinformed by the news media, I am to blame.
- The main thing that affects my knowledge about the world is what I myself do.
- If I pay attention to different sources of news, I can avoid being misinformed.
- If I take the right actions, I can stay informed.

Responses were averaged across the items to create a single score. A higher score would indicate more “internal” media locus on control, meaning that control of media’s influences is heavily regulated by an individual’s own actions. Low scores, on the other hand, would indicate that an individual perceived media’s effects to be controlled more by external factors, such as the media organization itself.

**Knowledge about the news media system.** Finally, we developed measures for what Potter calls “knowledge structures.” Specifically, these come from three categories of factual knowledge about U.S. media industries, about the typical content frames in which much news is produced and about the possible effects exposure to news media can have on individuals.

We created an index to assess these areas of knowledge. Specifically, we developed a series of multiple-choice questions about each of these categories. Each question had only one correct answer.

The first category, about the structure of the U.S. media system, focused on knowledge of business, ownership and regulatory systems. Specifically, this section included:

- Knowing that CNN.com employs reporters whereas Google News does not.
- Knowing that journalists are not required to be individually licensed in the United States.
- Knowing that PBS does not depend on advertising for financial support.
- Knowing that FOX News is generally thought to have a politically conservative bias.
- Knowing that only about five companies own the majority of major media outlets today compared to 50 companies in the early 1980s.
- Knowing that most media outlets are for-profit businesses.

The second category focused on knowledge of typical content and content frames produced by news organizations. Specifically, this section included:

- Knowing that the producer tends to be the person at a local TV station who has the most influence on what gets aired.
- Knowing that news coverage tends to underestimate the proportion of minorities in the U.S. population.
- Knowing that the common criticism of journalism not being objective refers to the idea that reporters insert their own opinions into stories.
- Knowing that a company spokesperson is more likely to write press releases compared to other media professionals.
- Knowing that election campaigns tend to focus on who's winning as opposed to more in-depth analysis of candidates and their backgrounds.

Finally, the third category focused on knowledge that the media can have effects on people and what some typical effects common in the research literature are:

- Knowing that most people tend to think that news has a greater effect on others than themselves.
- Knowing that people who watch a lot of television news tend to think the world is more violent and dangerous than it really is.
- Knowing that people tend to think topics that get more news coverage are more important than topics that get less coverage.
- Knowing some possible effects of news media's dependence on advertising for financial gain.

Survey respondents were presented with multiple-choice questions. For each question, a respondent would receive one point for each correct answer and no points for incorrect answers. Scores for each of the 15 questions were summed to make an overall Knowledge Structure Index Score. A higher score indicated more knowledge.



# Key Findings

## Focus Groups

To help us better understand how teenagers think about the news media, particularly in those areas the model suggests form the foundation of overall literacy (knowledge structures and personal locus), and thereby to help us refine the questions we would pose on the survey instrument, we conducted focus groups with Chicago-area high school students.

We recruited focus group participants with the help of three organizations that offer youth programs in Chicago – Free Spirit Media, the Oak Park Public Library, and the Mikva Challenge. These organizations distributed fliers describing the research project and instructing interested teenagers to contact us about participating. Thirty young people did so, had their parents complete and return consent forms and were assigned to one of three focus groups.

In all, 27 of the 30 students who signed up for the group participated. There were nine male and 18 female participants. All were between 15 and 18 years old and, with one exception, about to begin their sophomore, junior or senior year of high school. The only 18-year-old participant had just graduated. Participants were Asian, Black, Hispanic, multiracial and white.

The focus groups, each lasting between 60 and 90 minutes, were held on August 13, 2012, at Loyola University Chicago. Participants received \$50 Visa gift cards to compensate for their time.

## News media use

We began by getting a sense of how much and what kind of media participants use and what they think “news” is. These teenagers reported frequent and sometimes heavy use of social media and texting and less of traditional news media, such as newspapers and television, though some described getting news on Internet sites such as Yahoo as part of their daily routine. While social media platforms and texting are mostly for connecting with friends, gossiping and the like, they occasionally are also a way participants learn about news. The shooting at a Colorado movie theater (which had happened just a few weeks before) was one such news event, coverage of the Olympics another. A few participants also mentioned knowing about the Kony 2012 campaign, a viral video that became a social media phenomenon.

Many participants’ exposure to news is sort of “accidental” – a parent has the news on while driving them to school or points out stories in the newspaper to them at home in the evening. Whether via social media or traditional media, there was a sense in which teenagers think of news as something that they don’t need to seek out. Here’s how one teen described it:

*Participant: I don’t really look for news, I just kind of wait for it to come. If I listen to [the radio], yeah, but I’m not going to go searching for news, I just wait for it.*

*Moderator: So when you say you wait for it how – does it – how does it come to you?*

*Participant: From watching [...] TV randomly and then it comes on, I’ll just watch it because I’ll probably get too lazy to change the channel. And from the radio and just random news comes on, I just listen to it.*

## News media content, industries and effects

This view of news as something that doesn't need to be sought out makes sense in the context of these teenagers' definitions of news, which we explored to learn more about their news media knowledge. Asked what makes something "news," their responses echoed what a journalism textbook might list as newsworthiness criteria, such as importance, timeliness and novelty. Politicians, conflict and celebrities in particular feature prominently in their definitions – people and topics they perceive as rather distant from their lives (politics), outside their ability to do anything (conflict) or trivial (celebrities). Some also said they think the news exaggerates, is sometimes biased and not always truthful. In two of the three groups, participants mentioned a meeting with Chicago Police Superintendent Garry McCarthy that influenced their views about these perceived shortcomings in news. Participants said McCarthy suggested that the media focus on bad news while ignoring the good and misreport crime rates in Chicago. Asked why media might focus on bad news or make crime seem worse than it really is, participants speculated that negative news might be more interesting to people or that political bias or economic concerns might play a role.

Seeing a potential connection between the economics of news and news content might suggest that these participants have a fairly robust knowledge structure regarding media industries. Still, further probing revealed that most are not quite clear on who makes decisions at a news organization nor are they able to put all the pieces together regarding the commercial media system. That is, some participants seem to know that it might be important for a TV station, for example, to have high ratings, and to understand that bad or sensational news might boost those ratings, but not quite understand how ratings connect with advertising and advertising with content. This exchange illustrates this point:

*Participant: I think bad news catches people's eyes more than good news. People don't want to hear about -- I don't know, it doesn't catch their eye.*

*Moderator: Why do you think it would be important for CNN or whatever to really want to catch people's attention like that? Isn't the news just the news? Why would they want to focus on stuff that was more attention getting?*

*Participant: So you can be more aware.*

Participants voiced a number of views on how the news, particularly bad news, affects them and acknowledged that news might affect different people in different ways. Here are two contrasting comments:

*Participant: When I feel sad I tend to look up really sad stories, because then it makes me feel better because at least I know I'm not in that situation, and I feel better about my situation.*

*Participant: I actually think that paying attention too much to the news is kind of bad, because then you're kind of living through other people's lives and not really yours. Like I didn't pay attention to the news, and my parents always did. They would be so scared that I would go out – because they would hear all of these crazy things that people are doing. So I think that if you pay attention too much to the news, you kind of get scared of life and it prevents you from living in a way.*

We should note that this idea that heavy exposure to media representations (including news reports) depicting crime and violence can lead people to conclude that the world is more dangerous than it actually is has been supported by empirical research.

### **Personal locus**

While participants might think of news as negative and too focused on conflict, and even perceive that such negativity can have ill effects, many nonetheless believe news consumption is important. That's true on a personal level – participants said knowing what's going on in their neighborhoods can be a safety issue – as well as the societal level in terms of raising issues or awareness.

*Participant: Well, right now some news interests me, but it depends, like politics are boring.*

*Moderator: Yeah. What kind of news does interest you?*

*Participant: Just like what's going on in the world like when the civil wars were breaking out in Egypt and Siberia. Like that was an atrocity, like we haven't seen that, but now you're hearing about this happening and it's actually happening, with actual people. It's not just something irrelevant.*

Most participants see news as something more relevant to adults and imagine that when they are, say, old enough to vote, it will be more important to them. Even so, there are mixed feelings about whether news empowers people to act on the issues or problems it identifies – action they associate with being a good citizen. These comments from participants in different groups reflect this:

*Participant: I think the news is good because it gives you an attitude where you think you can make change. Even though they only put the negative stuff out there it's like they're telling us, this is what you need to change. We need to do something about the stuff that's going on so it's like pushing us to do better so I think it has a good effect on us even though it can be depressing and stuff but it's a good thing.*

*Participant: I think that it brings awareness, but I also think that it in itself can't make the world a better place because you really need readers to care – you need a certain audience to do something about it. You're saying that most of us don't do anything after we hear something because we feel so helpless and we can't change it. I feel like it kind of makes us feel powerless and so upset. So I don't think it in itself makes the world a better place.*

### **Conclusion**

Our exploration of teenagers' perceptions of news, from how and why they consume it to what they know about how it is created, revealed a basic understanding of the functions of news and why news is important. There was, however, some variation in participants' more specific understanding of how news is produced and the implications of aspects of its production on news content and effects. If news media literacy consists in having certain foundational knowledge and a drive to consume and process news, then these focus groups suggest that news media literacy varies even among high ability teens. Therefore, the focus groups indicate the presence of a concept distinct from general intellectual ability, providing a rationale for the development of the News Media Literacy scale.

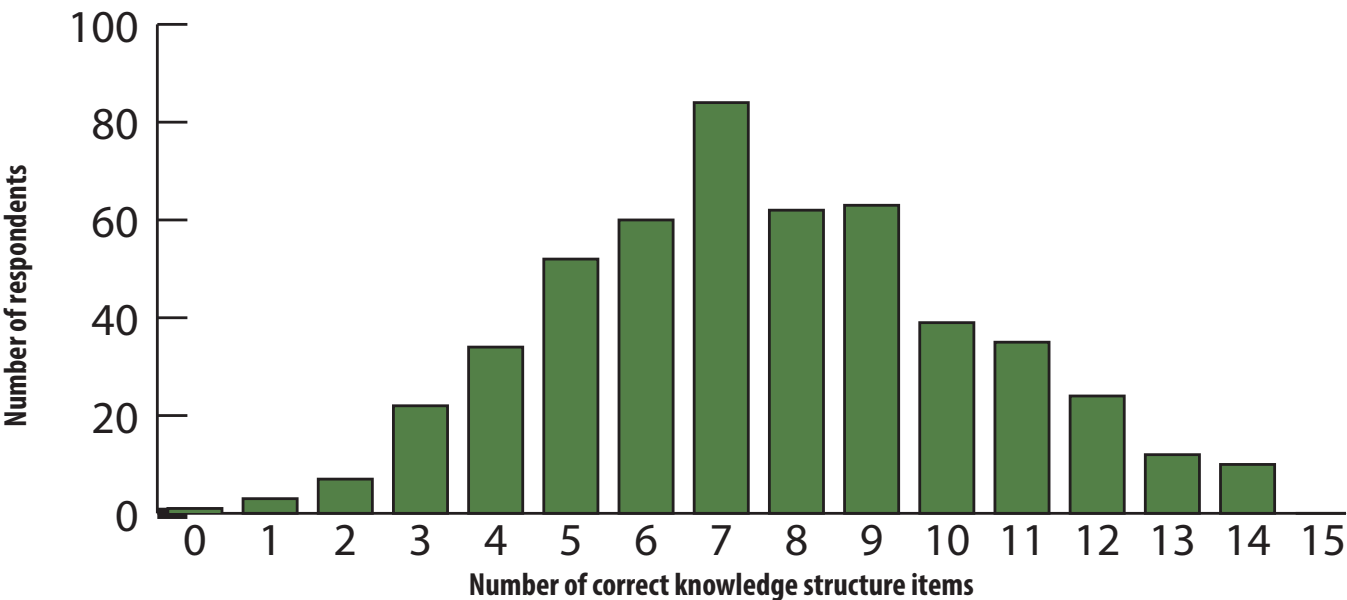
# Survey

A total of 508 Chicago-area adolescents (aged 14 to 17) took our survey (See “Methodology” on page 24 for more information on how the study was conducted). We found that youth clustered into two distinct groups: high news media literacy and low news media literacy. News media literate teens engage in mindful thought processes, believe themselves to be in control of news media message processing, and have a high degree of knowledge about the news industry and its structures and routines.

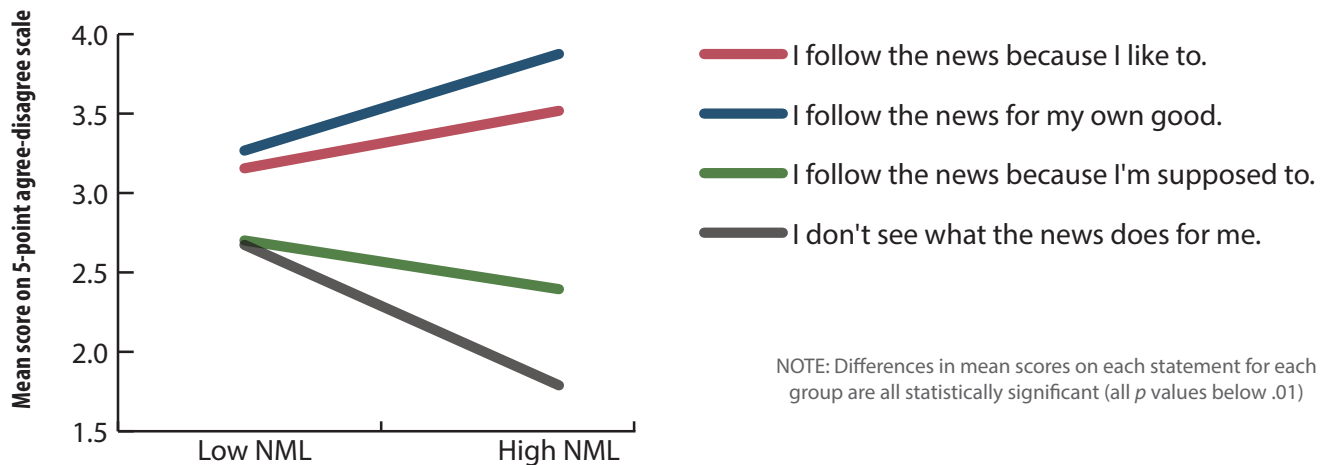
Respondents in the high literacy group were more likely than members of the low literacy group to agree with statements that indicated they enjoyed being in situations that were mentally challenging or complex. They also were more likely to agree with statements that indicated they perceived themselves to be in control of media’s effect on them. Finally, they correctly answered more factual questions about the general structure, content routines and possible effects of the U.S. media system:

Mindful thought-processing (measured on a five-point scale)	Media locus of control (measured on a five-point scale)	Knowledge structures (measured on a 15-point index)
MEAN SCORE (SD) Low NML: 3.01 (.85) High NML: 4.08 (.62)	MEAN SCORE (SD) Low NML: 3.13 (.72) High NML: 3.95 (.56)	MEAN SCORE (SD) Low NML: 5.89 (2.17) High NML: 9.22 (2.22)
Difference is statistically significant $F(1, 506) = 263.982, p < .001$	Difference is statistically significant $F(1, 506) = 207.701, p < .001$	Difference is statistically significant $F(1, 506) = 293.282, p < .001$

Numbers of respondents with each knowledge structure index score



## Agreement with motivation statements by news literacy group



### News media literate teens tend to be more likely to report being intrinsically motivated to follow the news, seeing it as a core part of their identities.

Teens were asked to respond to a series of four questions meant to assess motivations for following the news. Psychological research suggests that intrinsic motivation is the most beneficial and the type of motivation most likely to remain constant over time. An individual who is intrinsically motivated does something because he enjoys the activity and sees it as part of his identity.

We measured intrinsic motivation by asking the extent to which individuals agreed with statements about why they follow the news: “because I like to” and “for my own good.”

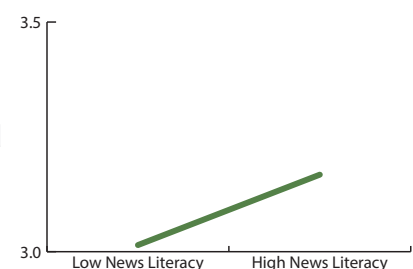
We also measured orientation toward being unmotivated (“I don’t see what the news does for me”) and being extrinsically motivated (“I follow the news because I’m supposed to”) for news use.

Relative to those in the low news media literacy group, those in the high group tended to also have higher scores for intrinsic motivation. We found the inverse for the items measuring amotivation (unmotivated) or extrinsic motivation. In other words, those Chicago teens in the high news media literacy group were more intrinsically motivated and less externally motivated to consume news compared to their counterparts with lower news media literacy scores.

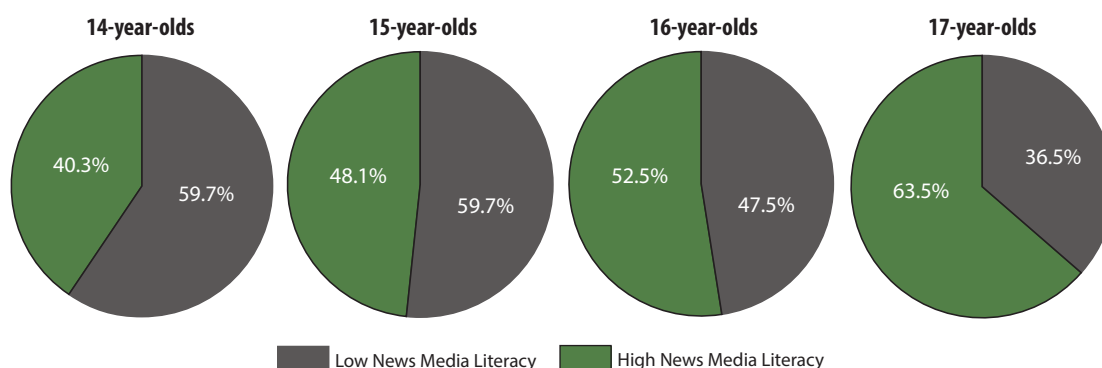
### News media literate teens report being slightly more skeptical of the news media relative to those who are less literate.

Media scholars have long been interested in the degree to which the public finds the news media to be credible and trustworthy sources of information. Likewise, scholars have explored how much individuals are skeptical of the news media. We asked a series of questions assessing such skepticism, including items that asked about how fair, accurate and trustworthy news media seem to be .

We found a relationship between news media literacy and news media skepticism. Those in the low news media literacy group showed slightly lower skepticism scores ( $M=3.01$ ,  $SD=.59$ ) than those in the high group ( $M=3.17$ ,  $SD=.64$ ). While the differences were small, they were statistically significant ( $F(1, 506) = 7.901$ ,  $p < .01$ )







### Older teens tend to be more news media literate than younger teens.

More highly news media literate teens are found among the 16- and 17-year-olds relative to their younger counterparts. For example, almost 60 percent of 14-year-olds are in the low news media literacy group, whereas only 36.5 percent of the 17-year-olds are in the low group.

### Neither gender is more news media literate than the other.

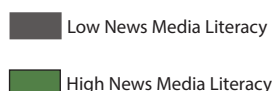
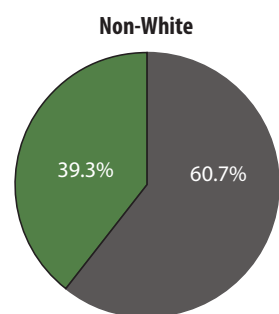
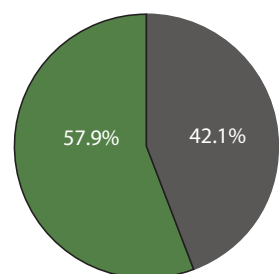
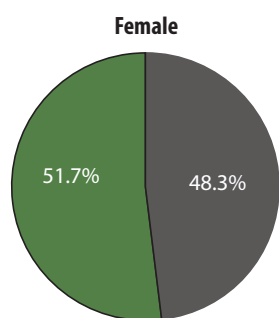
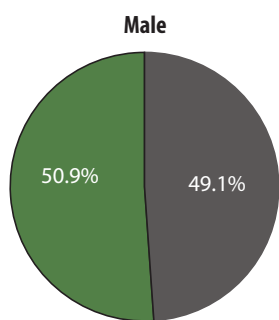
Males and females fared equally in terms of being in a highly news media literate group. About half of males were in the high news media literacy group, as were about half of the females. The differences between the two groups was not statistically significant.

### White teens tend to be more likely to be in the highly news media literate group relative to non-white teens.

More highly news media literate teens are found among those who identified as being white. For example, almost 58 percent of white teens are in the highly literate group, whereas 39 percent of non-white teens are in that group.

Further breaking down the data shows that 60.5 percent of African-American were in the low news media literacy group, whereas 39.5 percent were in the high news media literacy group. Among those who identify as Latino/Latina, 59.6 percent were in the low news media literacy group, whereas 40.4 percent were in the high news media literacy group. We did not receive enough responses from those identifying as Asian-American, American Indian, or multiracial to allow us to break down the data for these ethnicities.

The demographics of our sample differ somewhat from the racial/ethnic demographics of Chicago. According to the 2010 Census, about 32 percent of Chicago residents are non-Hispanic white, about 32 percent are African American, about 29 percent are Latino, 5.4 percent are Asian American, less than 1 percent are American Indian and 1.3 percent are multiracial. About 59 percent of our sample identified a white, about 25 percent as African American, about 9 percent as Latino, 1.6 percent as Asian American, less than 1 percent as American Indian, and 2.4% as multiracial.



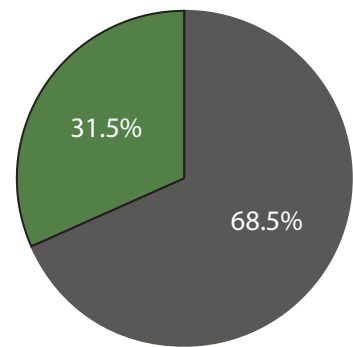
**News media literate teens tend to have at least one parent who went to college. Those teens whose parents completed vocational/trade school, high school or less were less likely to be in the high news media literacy group.**

Socioeconomic status is usually defined by some combination of income and education. Because teenagers are an unreliable source of information about family income, we asked respondents about parental education. Specifically, we presented respondents with two questions, one about their mothers and one about their fathers, that asked about highest level of education their parents had achieved. Choices were less than high school, high school graduate, vocational or technical school, some college, college graduate and graduate/professional degree.

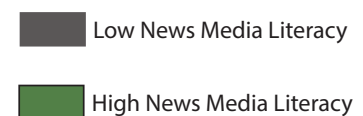
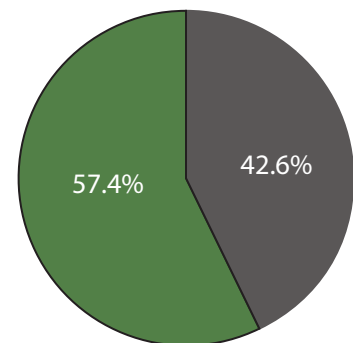
When we cross-tabulated teenagers' news media literacy with their parents' educational attainment, we found differences between the teenagers whose parents had attended at least some college and those who has no college or less education. The "less than college" group included parents who had a high school diploma or less and those who had attended a vocational/technical school. The "some college or more" group included those whose parents had attended or finished college and those who had a graduate degree.

About 68.5 percent of Chicago teenagers whose parents' highest level of education was "less than college" were also in the low news media literacy group. Only about 42.6 percent of teenagers whose parents had some college or more were in the low news media literacy group.

**Parents with less than college**

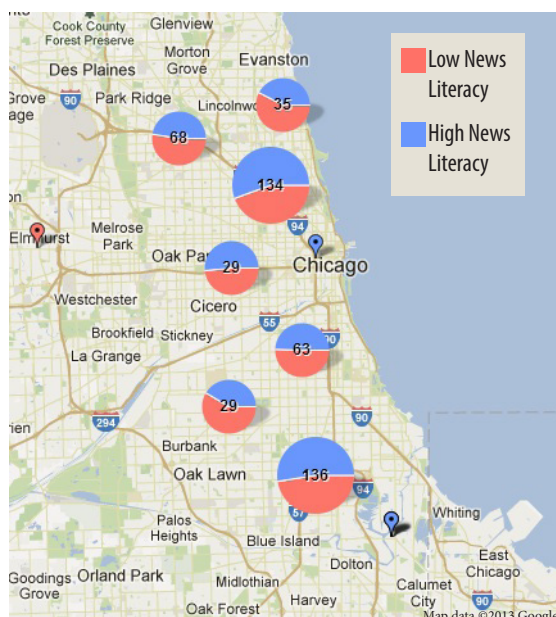


**Parents with college or more**

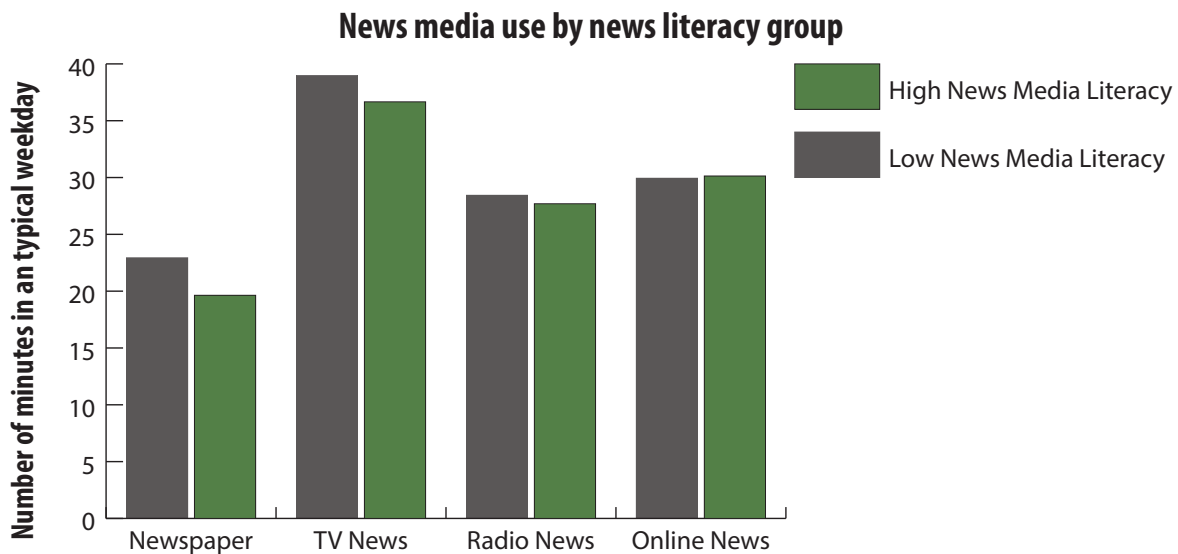


**News media literate teens come from all areas of Chicago.**

Our survey focused only on youth from the Chicago area. We were curious to see whether any differences existed among different neighborhoods, including an examination of various community characteristics (such as poverty or unemployment rate, median household income or percentage of individuals eligible for the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).



Indeed, the areas of the city where teenagers in the low news media literacy group live are not statistically different with regard to community factors from those areas where the highly news media literate group lives. Additionally, no substantial differences existed among different geographic areas of the city in the proportion of high versus low news media literacy teenagers. Indeed, most areas of the city see about a 50-50 split between the two groups, which is roughly the split when we analyze the city as a whole.



**Highly news media literate teens consumed no more news — via any medium — than those in the less literate group.**

About 25 percent of Chicago teenagers said that in a typical weekday they read a newspaper, 78 percent said they watched TV news, 37 percent said they listened to radio news, and 73 percent said they got news online. Most teenagers, about 80 percent, said they got news from at least two media each day.

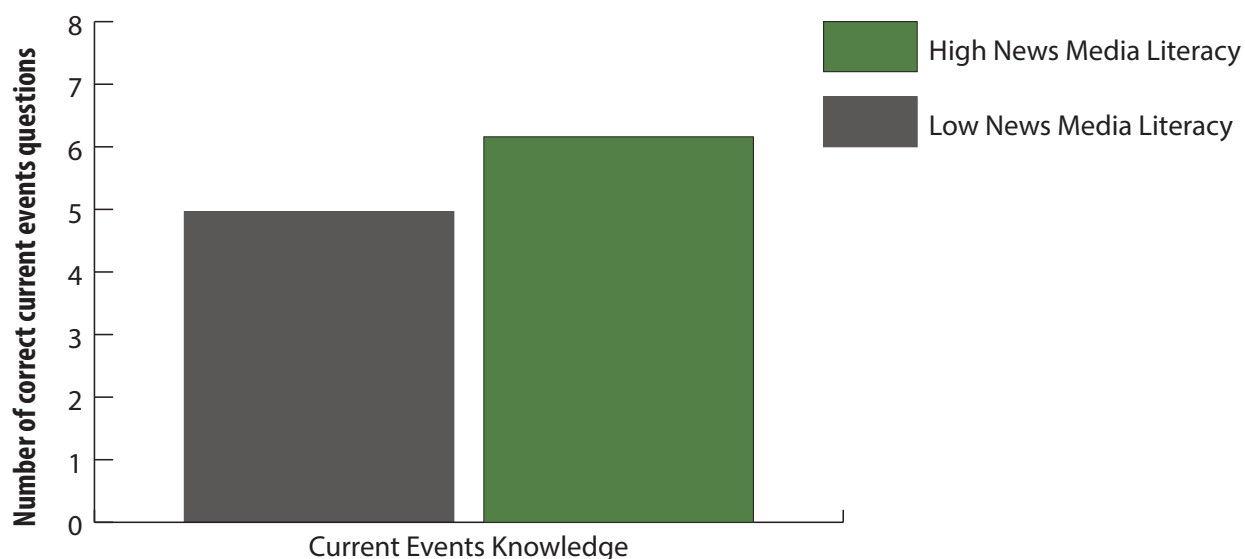
Compared to the low news media literacy group, those who were highly news media literate were slightly more likely to get news from online sources (53.5 percent versus 46.5 percent).

Among those who said they tuned into news every day, there was no statistically significant difference between the high and low news media literacy groups in the time spent each day with each medium. On the average weekday, respondents spent about 21 minutes reading the newspaper, 38 minutes watching television news, 28 minutes listening to radio news and 30 minutes getting news online.

**Highly news media literate teens show a higher level of current events knowledge than the low news media literacy group.**

We asked the teenagers about current events knowledge, including questions about local and national news. This survey was conducted during October and November 2012, so we also asked several questions about the policy orientations of the two presidential candidates.

Survey respondents were given one point for each correct answer, for a total possible score of seven. Those in the high news media literacy group answered an average of 6.16 correctly (SD=1.02), whereas those in the low news media literacy group scored an average of 4.96 correctly (SD=1.49). The difference was statistically significant ( $F(1, 505) = 111.770, p < .001$ ).



### The BIG picture — Who is news media literate

We define news media literate individuals as those who engage in mindful thought processing, believe themselves to be in control of media's effects on them, and have some knowledge of the media system and how it operates. And our research shows that those who are highly news media literate differ from those who are less literate.

Not surprising, but nonetheless important, is that teens with more educated parents tended to be more likely to be in the high literacy group. In other words, children of less educated parents don't think as critically about their media exposure and know less about how the media system is structured than children of the more highly educated. This is especially important because respondents consume the same amount of media regardless of their parents' education levels.

The highly news media literate tend to be more intrinsically motivated to consume news, but they are more skeptical. A highly news media literate individual will enjoy consuming news but will expect it to be credible and will display some level of discrimination in finding the most trustworthy information.

Knowledge of current events was quite high in both groups, but there was still a significant difference between the scores of the high and low literacy groups. While the extensively covered 2012 election might explain the high overall scores, the fact that a difference can be detected even in such an information-saturated environment bolsters the argument for the importance of news media literacy. Exposure to news and being able to make sense of that news are different things.

# A Plan of Action: How to Apply the Findings

Helping young Americans develop their news media literacy should be the goal of teachers, parents, researchers, administrators and policymakers. We can work together to make it easier for young people to navigate the changing news media landscape and build skills that will last a lifetime. News media literacy should continue to be incorporated into both secondary and higher education curricula, and teachers should continue to find ways to emphasize news media literacy in their own classrooms. Indeed, many already do, and it is our hope that this report can be a useful guide to help teachers organize and develop their instruction. Here are several points that can be used immediately by teachers in the classroom and over the long term in the curriculum development process. These points also can figure into future work that further explores and defines news media literacy.

**Mindful Consumption.** Previous theoretical and empirical research suggests that critical thinking and conscious processing of information are important components of news media literacy. Young people must be taught to be active and mindful in their news media consumption rather than relying on automatic processing habits. This means asking questions about news and other media content rather than accepting messages at face value. This also means being an active consumer of information and making conscious consumption decisions rather than passively consuming whatever is most easily and readily available. Students should learn to develop and articulate their own personal goals for consuming news and other media content, and they should be able to assess whether those goals are being met by the content they consume.





**News Media Knowledge.** It's certainly important to know what's in the news, but it's just as important to know how and why certain issues and events become news in the first place. This requires structural knowledge about how the media system and the news industry operate. In our surveys and focus groups, students knew little about the economic realities of news media such as the roles of advertising, profit orientations and ownership issues. Students should also learn about content formats and frames, including knowledge of news routines that influence the message construction process. Media effects constitute another important knowledge area. Some students seem to instinctively understand the potential effects of the disconnect between media representations and reality, but most need active instruction in this area.

**Individual Responsibility.** It's easy to blame the news media for their faults and shortcomings, but it's more important that students know how to take responsibility for their news media consumption. Students with a high internal media locus of control believe that their own consumption behavior determines whether they receive credible information and whether they become accurately informed. Students who understand their role in making consumption choices and are aware of the need to examine diverse sources are more likely to be appropriately skeptical of news media. Students should learn to connect their consumption behaviors with their knowledge about news media systems and structures. Only then can they be in control of their individual message consumption and processing.

Taken together, these are the three primary areas that constitute news media literacy. In the short term, teachers can rely on these general guidelines to discuss news media in the classroom, and they can also make use of the specific items that constitute the news media literacy survey presented in this report. Teachers can also develop their own classroom-specific ways to critically examine news media content, structures, routines and effects, as well as individual media consumption behaviors. In the long term, these general guidelines and these specific knowledge items should inform news media literacy curriculum development as it is formalized in secondary and higher education. We are pleased to see these important educational goals continue to spread throughout the United States, and we hope this report and survey instrument will be helpful tools for those who seek to help young Americans navigate the complex news media landscape.

# Appendix A: Methodology

Based on previous literature and our own pilot studies, we developed a survey instrument designed to capture various dimensions of news literacy. After the initial draft of the survey was complete, we conducted focus groups with Chicago-area teenagers to better understand how youth might respond to the types of questions we would ask and whether any survey items needed to be refined.

The final instrument was then presented to Chicago-area teenagers aged 14 to 17 via a phone survey conducted by trained research interviewers in late October and early November 2012.

## Sampling

The sampling design of the survey was a random sample of both landline and cell phone numbers proportional to the population of each of the zip codes in the Chicago area. Several attempts were made to complete an interview at every sampled number.

In total, 508 interviews were completed out of 1,225 contacts, for a response rate of 41.46 percent. This is better than expected given the added effort required to obtain parental consent for each person who completed the survey.

According to the Census Bureau, there are about 145,000 high-school-aged students in the City of Chicago. Given that estimate, our results are accurate to within plus or minus 4.3 percentage points, at the 95 percent level of confidence.

## Survey measures

Besides news media literacy questions, respondents answered questions about other characteristics used to help validate our survey tool. These characteristics included levels of intrinsic motivation, news media skepticism, news use and current events knowledge, as well as various demographics.

**Motivation.** Questions measuring motivations were based on Self Determination Theory, used by psychologists to study the extent to which one sees an activity as part of his or her core self-concept (Ryan & Deci, 2002; Grolnick, Deci, & Ryan, 1997).

Researchers have said that motivation for a given activity exists upon a spectrum, with amotivation being on one end and intrinsic motivation on the other. Between the two poles are introjection (understands the value of the activity but still sees it as being unrelated to them) and identification (understand the value and sees it as being in line with their own goals).

Each type of motivation was assessed using a separate statement: 1.) "I don't see what the news does for me" (amotivation); 2.) "I follow the news because I'm supposed to" (introjection); 3.) "I follow the news for my own good" (identification); and 4.) "I follow the news because I like to" (intrinsic motivation). These items were adapted from previous work (Koestner, Losier, Vallerand, & Carducci, 1996 ; Vallerand & O'Connor, 1989).

Respondents would indicate the extent to which they agreed with each statement on a five-point scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree). A high score on the first two statements would indicate less intrinsic motivation for following the news, meaning that following the news is likely seen as

external to how respondents defined themselves. A higher score on the latter two would indicate more intrinsic motivation, meaning that following the news is a core part of how respondents described themselves.

**News media skepticism.** This concept was used to measure mistrust in news media. In total, eight statements were presented to respondents. These items included statements about whether respondents thought the news media are fair, tell the whole story, are accurate, can be trusted, get in the way of society solving its problems, and whether news media prioritize being the first to report a story. We also asked respondents whether they thought media report the news fairly and if they have confidence in individuals running press institutions. These questions were based on previous research work into media confidence and credibility (Tsfati, 2003a, 2003b; Tsfati & Cappella, 2003, 2005).

Respondents used a five-point scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) to indicate the strength of their agreement or disagreement with each statement. Some responses were reverse-coded so that a higher score would indicate more skepticism or mistrust in the news media.

**News use.** Respondents were asked if and for how many minutes in a typical weekday they used newspapers, television, radio, and newspapers for news consumption.

**Current Events Knowledge.** Respondents were asked a series of seven multiple-choice questions on events in the news:

- Knowing that Joe Biden is the vice president of the United States.
- Knowing that Mitt Romney was the presidential candidate who supported restricting access to abortion in most cases.
- Knowing that Barack Obama was the presidential candidate who supported allowing many illegal immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children to remain in the country.
- Knowing that Mitt Romney was the presidential candidate who opposed allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally.
- Knowing that the national employment rate was about 8 percent.
- Knowing that the U.S. ambassador to Libya had recently been assassinated.
- Knowing that Rahm Emanuel was the mayor of Chicago.

Because the survey was conducted during October and November 2012, many questions were about the 2012 presidential election, though others were used, including one question about local Chicago politics. Many questions have been used on or were adapted from the Pew Research Center's News IQ quiz.

**Demographics.** Finally, respondents were asked various demographic questions, including age, gender, ethnicity and ZIP code. We asked the highest level of education completed by both the respondents' father and mother. This was used as a measure of socioeconomic status.

# Appendix B: Top-Line Results

Below are the results for each question in the survey, organized by topic.

## News Media Knowledge Structures: Media Industries

### Most media outlets in the United States are:

For-profit business (correct)	61.4%
Owned by the government	21.3%
Non-profit businesses	15%
Don't know	2.4%

### If you wanted to get a job as a news reporter in the US, you would need to get a license from...

The Federal Communications Commission	27.2%
The Federal Trade Commission	6.1%
Society of Professional Journalists	24.2%
News reporters are not required to be licensed (correct)	34.3%
Don't know	8.3%

### In 1983, around 50 companies owned most of the media outlets Americans consumed. How many companies own most of the media we consume today?

100	22.2%
50	28.3%
25	22.6%
5 (correct)	21.7%
Don't know	5.1%

### Which of the following cable news networks is generally thought to have a politically conservative bias?

CNN	19.7%
Fox News (correct)	59.1%
MSNBC	9.4%
MTV News	9.4%
Don't know	2.4%

### Which of the following news outlets does NOT depend primarily on advertising for financial support?

CNN	21.3%
PBS (correct)	45.3%
The New York Times	15.6%
Newsweek magazine	13.6%
Don't know	4.3%

**When it comes to reporting the news, the main difference between a website like Google News and a website like CNN.com is that:**

Google does not have reporters who gather information, while CNN does (correct)	60.2%
Google focuses on national news, while CNN focuses on local news	14.2%
Google has more editors than CNN does	12.2%
Google charges more money for news than CNN does	9.6%
Don't know	3.7%

### **News Media Knowledge Structures: Media Content**

**Who has the most influence on what gets aired on the local TV news?**

Individual reporters	12.2%
The anchor, the person reading the news	8.5%
The cameraman	1%
The producer/editor (correct)	78%
Don't know	0.4%

**The amount of racial/ethnic minority coverage in the news:**

Accurately reflects the proportion of minorities in the U.S. population	26.4%
Under-represents reflects the proportion of minorities in the U.S. population (correct)	46.7%
Over-represents reflects the proportion of minorities in the U.S. population	24.8%
Don't know	2.2%

**Coverage of election campaigns in the news usually centers on:**

Who's winning (correct)	38.8%
In-depth analysis of where candidates stand on the issues	50.4%
The candidates' educational backgrounds	9.6%
Don't know	1.2%

**One common criticism of the news is that it is not objective. What do people who make that criticism typically mean by it?**

The reporter gives only the facts about the story	25%
The reporter puts his or her opinion in the story (correct)	47.6%
The reporter's story relies too much on the opinions of people who are neutral	15%
The reporter doesn't make the purpose of the story clear	11.8%
Don't know	0.6%

**Writing a press release is typically the job of:**

A reporter for CNN.com	39.4%
A spokesperson for Coca-Cola (correct)	17.9%
A lawyer for Yahoo!	13.4%
A producer for NBC Nightly News	27.2%
Don't know	2.2%



## News Media Knowledge Structures: Media Effects

### Most people think the news has:

A greater effect on themselves than other people	15.2%
A greater effect on other people than themselves (correct)	37.6%
The same effect on themselves as others	42.1%
Does not have any effects on anyone	4.9%
Don't know	0.2%

### People who watch a lot of television news often tend to think the world is:

More violent and dangerous than it actually is (correct)	59.8%
Less violent and dangerous than it actually is	5.5%
Just as violent and dangerous as it actually is	34.3%
Don't know	0.4%

### If a topic gets a lot of coverage in the news, people who pay attention to the news are:

More likely to think the topic is important (correct)	82.1%
Less likely to think the topic is important	3.5%
Neither more nor less likely to think the topic is important	14.2%
Don't know	0.2%

### Most news outlets depend on advertising to make money. What is a possible effect of this?

News could encourage people to buy things they don't need.	9.6%
News could emphasize things that aren't really important.	11%
All of the above. (correct)	67.3%
None of the above. There are no effects.	11.8%
Don't know	0.2%

## Automatic vs. Mindful Thought Processing

*On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree, please tell me how much you agree or disagree with this statement.*

### I don't like to have to do a lot of thinking. (reverse-coded)

Strongly disagree (1)	35%
(2)	25%
(3)	19.5%
(4)	9.3%
Strongly agree (5)	11.2%

### I try to avoid situations that require thinking in depth about something. (reverse-coded)

Strongly disagree (1)	33.9%
(2)	27%
(3)	20.1%
(4)	10.2%
Strongly agree (5)	8.9%

**I prefer to do something that challenges my thinking abilities rather than something that requires little thought.**

Strongly disagree (1)	6.7%
(2)	9.4%
(3)	18.5%
(4)	33.5%
Strongly agree (5)	31.9%

**I prefer complex to simple problems.**

Strongly disagree (1)	8.7%
(2)	14.6%
(3)	35.8%
(4)	23%
Strongly agree (5)	17.9%

**Thinking hard and for a long time about something gives me little satisfaction. (reverse-coded)**

Strongly disagree (1)	25.6%
(2)	26.4%
(3)	25%
(4)	12.8%
Strongly agree (5)	10.2%

### **Person in Control vs. Media in Control**

*On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree, please tell me how much you agree or disagree with this statement.*

**If I am misinformed by the news media, it is my own behavior that determines how soon I will learn credible information.**

Strongly disagree (1)	7.1%
(2)	12%
(3)	33.7%
(4)	25.6%
Strongly agree (5)	21.5%

**I am in control of the information I get from the news media.**

Strongly disagree (1)	15%
(2)	20%
(3)	29.2%
(4)	16%
Strongly agree (5)	19.8%

**When I am misinformed by the news media, I am to blame.**

Strongly disagree (1)	35.6%
(2)	24.1%
(3)	18.4%
(4)	11.7%
Strongly agree (5)	10.3%

**The main thing that affects my knowledge about the world is what I myself do.**

Strongly disagree (1)	5.5%
(2)	11%
(3)	33.7%
(4)	28.8%
Strongly agree (5)	20.9%

**If I pay attention to different sources of news, I can avoid being misinformed.**

Strongly disagree (1)	6.1%
(2)	9.8%
(3)	20.5%
(4)	28.9%
Strongly agree (5)	34.6%

**If I take the right actions, I can stay informed.**

Strongly disagree (1)	6.7%
(2)	8.1%
(3)	8.5%
(4)	32.7%
Strongly agree (5)	44.1%

### **Motivations for News Consumption**

*On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree, please tell me how much you agree or disagree with this statement.*

**I don't see what news does for me.**

Strongly disagree (1)	37.9%
(2)	30.2%
(3)	13%
(4)	9.3%
Strongly agree (5)	9.7%

**I follow the news because I'm supposed to.**

Strongly disagree (1)	26.4%
(2)	24.5%
(3)	24.7%
(4)	17%
Strongly agree (5)	7.5%

**I follow the news for my own good.**

Strongly disagree (1)	7.5%
(2)	11.4%
(3)	22.6%
(4)	33.1%
Strongly agree (5)	25.4%

**I follow the news because I like to.**

Strongly disagree (1)	10.8%
(2)	12.8%
(3)	28.7%
(4)	27%
Strongly agree (5)	20.7%

**News Media Skepticism**

*On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree, please tell me how much you agree or disagree with this statement.*

**I think the news media are fair. (reverse-coded)**

Strongly disagree (1)	8.1%
(2)	21.7%
(3)	38.8%
(4)	23.8%
Strongly agree (5)	7.7%

**I think the news media tell the whole story. (reverse-coded)**

Strongly disagree (1)	24.6%
(2)	25.6%
(3)	31.9%
(4)	13.4%
Strongly agree (5)	4.5%

**I think the news media are accurate. (reverse-coded)**

Strongly disagree (1)	6.3%
(2)	14.4%
(3)	43.3%
(4)	28.5%
Strongly agree (5)	7.5%

**I don't think the news media can be trusted.**

Strongly disagree (1)	11%
(2)	28%
(3)	35.6%
(4)	18.1%
Strongly agree (5)	7.3%

**I think the news media prioritize being first to report a story.**

Strongly disagree (1)	5.1%
(2)	9.3%
(3)	26%
(4)	27%
Strongly agree (5)	32.5%

**I think the news media get in the way of society solving its problems.**

Strongly disagree (1)	12.8%
(2)	27.5%
(3)	31.8%
(4)	21.9%
Strongly agree (5)	5.9%

**I trust the media to report the news fairly. (reverse-coded)**

Strongly disagree (1)	11%
(2)	21.5%
(3)	34.4%
(4)	25.2%
Strongly agree (5)	7.9%

**I have confidence in the people running the institutions of the press. (reverse-coded)**

Strongly disagree (1)	11.4%
(2)	17.5%
(3)	39.6%
(4)	23.2%
Strongly agree (5)	8.3%

## **News Media Use**

**On a typical weekday, do you read a daily newspaper, or not?**

Yes	25.6%
No	74.4%

**If yes, about how much time do you spend reading a daily print newspaper on a typical weekday?**

Mean (SD): 21.2 minutes (15.2)

**On a typical weekday, do you watch the news or any news programs on television, or not?**

Yes	78.5%
No	21.5%

**If yes, about how much time do you spend watching the news or any news programs on television on a typical weekday?**

Mean (SD): 37.8 minutes (25.6)

**On a typical weekday, do you listen to the news or any news programs on radio, or not?**

Yes	36.8%
No	63.2%



**If yes, about how much time do you spend listening to the news or any news programs on the radio on a typical weekday?**

Mean (SD): 28 minutes (22)

**On a typical weekday, do you get any news online through the Internet, or not?**

Yes 73%

No 27%

**If yes, about how much time do you spend getting news online on a typical weekday?**

Mean (SD): 30 minutes (28.5)

### **Current Events Knowledge**

**Who is Joe Biden?**

Vice President (correct) 93.8%

UN Ambassador 1%

Governor of Illinois 2.2%

Don't know 3%

**Which presidential candidate is PRO-LIFE, that is, supports restricting access to abortion in most cases?**

Obama 21.1%

Romney (correct) 73.4%

Neither 0.2%

Don't know 5.3%

**Which presidential candidate supports allowing many illegal immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children to remain in the country?**

Obama (correct) 86.4%

Romney 5.3%

Both 0.4%

Don't know 7.9%

**Which presidential candidate opposes allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally?**

Obama 10.4%

Romney (correct) 84.9%

Both 0.4%

Neither 0.2%

Don't know 4.1%

**Is the national unemployment rate as reported by the government currently closer to...?**

5% 8.1%

8% (correct) 49.2%

15% 20.9%

21% 10%

Don't know 11.8%

**Last month, a U.S. ambassador was killed in which country?**

China	1.4%
Libya (correct)	74.9%
Russia	1.4%
Israel	9.3%
Don't know	13%

**Who is the mayor of Chicago?**

Rahm Emanuel (correct)	92.8%
Richard Daley	3%
Valerie Jarrett	0%
Paul Ryan	1.8%
Don't know	2.4%

**Demographics****Age**

14	23.6%
15	26%
16	27.6%
17	22.8%

**Gender**

Male	49.4%
Female	50.6%

**Ethnicity**

White	59%
African American	24.7%
Latino/Hispanic	9.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.6%
American Indian	0.6%
Multiracial	2.4%
Other	2.4%

**What is the highest level of school your mother/father has completed?**

	<b>Mother</b>	<b>Father</b>
Less than high school	1.8%	2.8%
High school/GED	18.5%	18.1%
Some college but no degree	10.8%	12%
Vocational/Technical/Associate/Community college degree	6.7%	4.9%
Four-year college degree	30.5%	28.5%
Post-college/advanced degree such as master's or doctoral degree	23%	21.7%
Don't Know/Not Sure	8.7%	12%

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